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UM debate team grabs top honors

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NEWS RELEASE

Feb. 7, 2003

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UM DEBATE TEAM GRABS TOP HONORS

MISSOULA-

The University of Montana debate team earned several awards at the University of Utah's Great Salt Lake Invitational Jan. 25-26. Six UM students placed in competition against students from over 30 colleges and universities nationwide.

Freshmen Rob Killian of **Bozeman** and Stephen Sandford of **Missoula** won first place in the novice division of parliamentary debate, defeating Western Washington University in the final round with their argument upholding the statement "Human nature tends toward goodness."

In the open division of debate, senior Jen Kirby of **Stevensville** and Blake Zollar, a sophomore from **Missoula**, advanced to the final round with a 7-2 record. They placed second overall behind Pacific Lutheran University of Tacoma, Wash., in a debate that focused on affirmative action policies in higher education.

Kirby also earned third place with an oral interpretation of literature based on Mark Twain's "The War Prayer." Zollar took fifth place in extemporaneous speaking on current news topics.

In addition, Lacy Chaffin, a junior from **Corvallis**, and Ryan Stavnes, a junior from **Helena**, placed third in novice debate, and Chaffin was honored as the third-best debater in the

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division.

"The Utah event was a breakthrough for our young program," said coach Jay Lininger, a UM graduate student. "We are competing with and beating many of the brightest young women and men in the country."

The UM speech and debate program, originally founded in the late 19th century, is in its third year of existence after nearly 20 years of inactivity.

The team will compete in the William O. Douglas Invitational tournament at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Wash., Feb. 7-9 and at the National Parliamentary Debate Association Championships at Portland State University in Oregon March 28-30.

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